



# Lisa Robinson

PICKERING CITY COUNCILLOR

## I didn't do it for fame or power

Last year I served on Pickering City Council and worked every day for the people who elected me. I didn't do it for fame or power — I did it because I believe in truth, transparency, and accountability in local government.

My compensation for that service was about \$15,000 plus benefits for the year — far less than many residents make in a month and certainly not life-changing.

Contrast that with ongoing conversations about compensation paid to Pickering's mayor and councillors — a conversation that shouldn't be dismissed because it touches on something real and deeply felt in our community.

A recent post and social media discussions have cited figures suggesting that the total compensation for Pickering's mayor — including salary, benefits, pension, committee fees, and allowances — was about \$318,000 in 2025. The mayor himself publicly acknowledged that some of those totals were overstated by roughly \$58,000 compared to his base salary and official disclosures, but even so, figures well over \$250,000 for a municipality that can't officially claim the higher mayoral powers assigned to municipalities of 100,000 or more are raising eyebrows for residents watching every dollar they spend.

Pickering's population is often cited as "close to 100,000," but that number only recently crossed that threshold — a threshold that grants expanded powers and authority under the Municipal Act. For years we governed below that number. That's important because the Municipal Act specifically attaches additional powers to municipalities once they reach a population of 100,000. And yet here we are, discussing compensation packages that rival much larger cities.

Let's put it in perspective:

Pickering's population is allegedly 100,000, yet we still function with the same core municipal responsibilities as all smaller cities across Ontario.

Toronto's population is over 3 million people — more than 30 times larger than Pickering — yet the Mayor of Toronto's base compensation sits significantly below the totals being discussed for our mayor when all remuneration is included.

At the same time, all members of Pickering City Council — both at the city and regional level — draw compensation and, in many cases, allowances and reimbursements for meetings, travel, and committee work. Members of Durham Regional Council also collect regional remuneration and expense payouts on top of their municipal compensation. These are public servants, yes — but they are paid roles funded by taxpayers.

Here's what troubles many residents: it often seems that people who follow the status quo at council are rewarded, while those who speak up about what they see as wasteful spending, lack of transparency, or misleading information are punished. In my experience — and in the experience of many citizens across municipalities now — there is a troubling trend where elected officials who raise difficult questions or challenge the majority face not reasoned debate but code of conduct complaints and political pressure.

This isn't just about numbers. It's about how power is exercised. Right now, municipal leaders in Ontario are considering changes to the Municipal Act that would expand the authority of integrity commissioners and councillors to remove an elected member of council — effectively taking away the democratic rights of the people who voted for that person. If you don't follow the status quo, your own council colleagues could file complaints with an integrity commissioner, and the same council could vote to have you removed from office. That isn't democratic — that's a warning sign for anyone who cares about real representation.

This is not unique to Pickering. Across Ontario and beyond, we're seeing local officials who speak openly about what they see — wasteful spending, lack of accountability, decisions that don't reflect taxpayers' priorities — being targeted with conduct complaints, legal threats, and political pushback. It sends a chilling message to anyone thinking about public service: Speak up, and you may pay a price. Stay quiet, and the status quo stays in place.

That's not how democracy is supposed to work. Local government should be a place where serious issues are discussed openly and where accountability isn't just a buzzword but a lived practice. Residents deserve clarity on how compensation is calculated, what's included in "total compensation," and — most importantly — whether these compensation levels reflect the priorities of the very people who pay the bills.

So here's the question taxpayers in Pickering and all of Durham Region should be asking: Should a mayor in a city of just over 100,000 people — with councillors at both the city and regional level drawing additional allowances — see total compensation approaching or exceeding what leaders in cities with millions of residents earn? And should the Municipal Act be changed so that elected officials can be removed by council and an integrity commissioner rather than by the voters who elected them?

This isn't just about a number on a pay stub. This is about fairness, democracy, and trust. Taxpayers deserve better. They deserve answers. And they deserve leaders who aren't afraid to ask difficult questions without being silenced.



# THE Mr. X Files

By John Mutton  
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

## Karmageddon

By Mr. 'X' ~ John Mutton  
CENTRAL EXCLUSIVE

### Mr. X Explains the Development Charge Paradox

A comprehensive Ontario municipal finance white paper on Development Charge rates, housing supply, and long-term fiscal sustainability

#### 1. Introduction

Ontario municipalities rely on Development Charges (DCs) to fund growth-related infrastructure. While intended to ensure that growth pays for growth, Development Charges can unintentionally suppress development activity when set beyond optimal levels. This paper explains the Development Charge Paradox using an adapted Laffer Curve framework.

#### 2. Ontario Development Charge Framework

Development Charges are governed by Ontario's Development Charges Act and implemented through municipal background studies. Recent reforms, including Bill 23, reduced recoverability, introduced mandatory discounts, and constrained indexing. These changes increase development sensitivity to DC rate decisions.

#### 3. The Development Charge Paradox

At a Development Charge Rate of zero, Development Charge Revenue is also zero. As rates increase, revenue initially rises. Beyond an optimal point, higher DC rates suppress housing development faster than per-unit charges increase, resulting in declining Development Charge Revenue.

#### 4. Equal Revenue, Unequal Outcomes

The curve demonstrates that the same Development Charge Revenue can be achieved at two different Development Charge Rates. A low-rate, high-growth environment produces strong housing delivery and assessment growth. A high-rate, low-growth environment produces stagnation, even if short-term revenues appear similar.

#### 5. Benefits of Lower Development Charge Rates

Lower Development Charge Rates improve project feasibility, accelerate housing starts, support missing-middle and rental housing, and broaden the long-term municipal tax base.

#### 6. Risks of Development Charge Rates Set Too Low

If Development Charge Rates are set too low, municipalities may face infrastructure funding timing gaps. These risks can be managed through capital phasing, debt financing, and improved growth planning rather than suppressing development.

#### 7. The Optimal Development Charge Rate

The peak of the curve represents the optimal Development Charge Rate. At this point, Development Charge Revenue and housing delivery are maximized simultaneously, aligning municipal revenue objectives with housing supply goals.

#### 8. Laissez-Faire

##### Economics and Necessary Government Intervention

Development Charge policy should generally follow laissez-faire economic principles, allowing market forces to determine pricing, supply, and investment decisions. However, where Development Charges are reduced to stimulate housing delivery, a degree of targeted government intervention is necessary to ensure that these reductions are reflected in housing prices rather than being absorbed entirely into developer margins.

#### 9. Consequences of Excessively High Development Charge Rates

Excessively high Development Charge Rates delay or cancel projects, encourage land banking, shift growth to other municipalities, and ultimately reduce Development Charge Revenue.

#### 10. Long-Term Municipal Fiscal Impacts

Development Charges are a one-time revenue source, while property taxes are recurring. Municipalities that prioritize long-term assessment growth over short-term DC maximization achieve greater fiscal sustainability.

#### 11. Conclusion

The Development Charge Paradox demonstrates that higher Development Charge Rates do not guarantee higher revenue. Optimal outcomes occur when Development Charges balance infrastructure funding with housing supply, economic vitality, and long-term municipal prosperity.

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